



## State Senator Robert Garton District 41



### INDIANA'S NEW AMBER ALERT LEGISLATION DESIGNED TO INCREASE CHANCES OF LOCATING ABDUCTED CHILDREN

Although infrequent, few things terrify mothers and fathers more than the thought of a stranger abducting their child. In recent months, however, child abduction cases have been brought increasingly into the media spotlight. In an effort to increase the success of locating a child when an abduction occurs, the Indiana General Assembly this past session adopted legislation to give law enforcement officials greater resources to rescue abducted children.

Arranged between Indiana's Missing Children Information Clearinghouse run by the State Police, and T.V. and radio stations around the state, Amber Alert plan helps rescue abducted children by broadcasting vital descriptive information of the case on the air quickly so the public may participate in the search.

After a law enforcement official receives information that a stranger has kidnapped a child, the officer conducts a brief investigation to verify the abduction and to gather information that could help locate the child. After the official provides this information to the Clearinghouse, the Clearinghouse sends it to local primary stations. Broadcasters then use the Emergency Alert System, the same system that broadcasts severe weather emergencies, to pass the information on to the public.

California instituted the Amber Alert program just last week after the kidnapping and murder of 5 year-old Samantha Runnion in Orange County. The system was implemented for the recent abduction of two teenage girls in southern California that resulted in the girls returning to their families alive.

Statistics show that the greatest enemy in child abduction cases is time. As the hours since an abduction grow, the child's chance of survival decreases. According to the Child Alert Foundation, 74 percent of children murdered by non-family members are killed within the first three hours after their abduction.

The Amber Alert program increases community awareness in the rare event of a stranger abduction and helps to disperse information when needed so that citizens become the eyes and ears of law enforcement.

In 1996, concerned citizens created the original Amber Alert as a tribute to nine-year-old Amber Hagerman who was kidnapped and murdered while riding her bicycle in Arlington, Texas. According to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, law enforcement officials nationwide already have found 20 abducted children through the use of the plan.

*Garton represents District 41, which includes Bartholomew County and portions of Johnson and Shelby counties.*

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